

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT

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SUBJECT The Bolshevik Gold Mine in the Kolyma Area /Manpower, working conditions, security, quality of gold mined, description and sketch of mining procedure

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A nine-page report on the operations of the Bolshevik Gold Mine in the Kolyma area in 1939-1941 and a sketch of the mining procedure

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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

Attachment to

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Bolshevik Gold Mine in Kolyma, USSR

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1. The Bolshevik Gold Mine (Priyisk Bol'shevik) was located approximately 800 kilometers from Magadan. The Director of the mine (nachalnik priyiska) was Engineer SARAKHANOV. There was a camp for 3,500 prisoners who worked at this and some other adjoining gold mines. All in this camp were political prisoners

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This mine was approximately 10 kilometers from the camp and prisoners were taken to and from work by truck.

2. The gold mined at the Bolshevik mine, and allegedly at all the other gold mines in Kolyma, was exclusively in nugget (samorodok) form, from two millimeters in diameter, and up to two or three kilograms in weight. The largest piece of gold was 2.6 kilograms and was found in the Bolshevik Mine. several of 2.5, 2.2, and 1.8 kilograms.

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3. Normal procedure in the Bolshevik Gold Mine was to remove the surface layer of earth, which was rather sandy and usually 1.5 to 2 meters thick. Sometimes, however, this layer was up to 7 and 8 meters deep. The surface layer never contained any gold and, therefore, was simply removed. Beneath this layer there was always a rock formation.

it was extremely hard, unified in structure, and light gray in color. The rock layer was usually 50 to 60 centimeters thick and con-

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[redacted]

tained a certain quantity of small sized gold nuggets, from 2 to 5 millimeters in diameter. Further down, under the rock layer, there was a layer of black, oily, sandy earth, which [redacted] was very similar in appearance to black pressed caviar. This was the layer richest in gold nuggets of all sizes, from several grams to 1 or two kilograms, but mostly 0.5 to 1 centimeter in diameter. Water was always found beneath the third layer, and excavation work was discontinued as soon as the underground water was reached.

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4. Whenever a new area of the mine, a stope, referred to as zaboy, was opened and the surface layer of earth removed, the rock layer was blown by amonal and the rocks were taken in wheelbarrows to a hopper called a bunker installed at the beginning of a rubberized transporter and dumped into the hopper. From there the rocks were taken by the transporter to a wooden trough referred to as putara, approximately 10 to 12 meters long, 0.55 meters wide, and 0.5 meters high. This trough was lined with dark gray sheet metal. The bottom of the trough was of metal and had a large number of holes in it, from 4 to 25 millimeters in diameter, through which the gold nuggets would fall into specially built metal compartments (always kept sealed with metal seals by MVD representatives in charge of gold collection) located directly below the holes. The trough was placed at a certain incline in order that the part connected with the transporter was higher than the other. The water stream for washing the gold ore was brought to the trough by a pipe and pumped ~~and xpm~~ by means of a mobile electric motor operated by a gasoline powered unit. Convicts were stationed along the side of the trough opposite the transporter at every 1.5 meters. They had iron rakes and it was their job to keep raking through the incoming ore and water, in this way helping to separate the gold from the waste. [redacted] this idea was very

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practical and [] when the waste came to the end of the trough, it never contained any gold except for a few very large nuggets of 400 to 500 grams in weight which could not get through the holes in the bottom of the trough. Every four hours the MVD representative, accompanied by either the mine director or the uchastok head, removed the seals and emptied the gold compartments. On these occasions all prisoners and free laborers were moved from the area.

5. Search of the waste was made once a week, on Sunday. It was always referred to as udarnyy day, and all prisoners from the camp were forced to participate in it. On these days the waste was thoroughly inspected for gold nuggets and any prisoner who found one was paid 2.15 rubles for every gram of gold by the camp administration. This money was not paid in cash, but in camp script. It was on one of these occasions that a gold nugget weighing 2.6 kilograms was found by a prisoner who was paid about 5,500 rubles for it.

6. Only one stope of approximately 50 x 50 meters in size was exploited at any one time by the Bolshevik Mine. Exploitation of such a stope usually took two to two and one-half months, after which it was considered completely exploited. After that, horizontal drills were made in the slopes surrounding the stope, and samples of rock and the black oily sand were analyzed for gold at the administration laboratory. If the samples contained any gold, a new stope was then opened adjoining the old one, and the gold jigging procedure described above was repeated. If no gold was found on any of the sides of

[redacted] 25X1

of the exploited stope, it was simply abandoned and a search was launched for a new one. [redacted] this was no problem at all because there was 25X1 so much gold in the Kolyma region that wherever they dug there was always some gold.

7. Opening of a new stope always started with the digging of a well through the surface layer down to the rocks. This well, referred to as shurfa, was normally 1.5 meters in diameter. The work was done exactly the same as in digging any other well, with hand tools, ropes, and buckets to lift the loosened earth to the surface. When the rock layer was reached, samples of rock were taken to the surface and examined at an institution called analiz-laboratoriya, located outside the camp compound. No prisoners worked there [redacted] The amount 25X1 taken for examination was usually one or two one-quart tins full. [redacted] 25X1

wherever a shurfa was dug and rock samples taken, there was always gold.

[redacted] in digging of over 20 shurfa-s on various stopes there was not a single case where gold was not found.

8. Analysis of rock samples in the mine laboratory took no more than several hours, and exploitation usually started on the afternoon of the same day or the morning of the next day. The first stage in the exploitation of a [redacted] 25X1

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new stope was the removal of the surface layer of earth. This was done by digging rows of shurfa-s 1.5 meters in diameter through the entire area of the new stope. The distance of the shurfa-s from one another was always 1.75 to 2 meters in each direction. When the rock layer was reached, the entire layer of earth was blown by amonal. One case of amonal of approximately 50 kilos was used for two or three shurfa-s. When all the shurfa-s had been provided with explosive placed in one or two horizontal shafts branching from each, the shurfa-s were filled with earth and the entire area of the stope was blown from a central spot several hundred meters away from the stope. Bickford fuses were used for blowing. All work connected with this, as well as the actual firing, was done by personnel called podryvniki, prisoners ~~(bytoviki)~~ brought to the stope from some camp [redacted] After the blowing was completed, the layer of earth was removed by prisoners equipped for this purpose with large wooden boxes referred to as korob which were put on sleds. Five to six prisoners were assigned to each korob. When the rock layer was unearthed, several rows of shafts referred to as burki, 20 to 25 centimeters in diameter and 25 to 30 centimeters deep, were ~~xxxxxx~~ made in the rock. The rows of shafts were approximately 30 centimeters apart. When the entire area of the stope was covered with burki, approximately 250 grams of amonal was put in each of them, and they were blown in series of 10. Every burok was provided with an individual slow-burning Bickford fuse sticking out of it. The firing was done by the same bytoviki mentioned ^{above} ~~in the previous paragraph~~ one podryvnik for every 10 burki, who hurriedly went from one to the next and on up to the 10th, firing the fuses. The length of the fuse was always such that there was sufficient time to fire all 10 and to get away from the area

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[redacted]

prior to the explosion of the first burok. Following this the blown rock was moved to one side of the stope, and the above-described process of digging and blowing of the burki was continued until the layer of black sand was reached and the entire rock layer removed.

9. The black sand layer was broken by spades, picks, and crow bars, depending on the hardness of the ground. Only after this work started was the jigging of gold launched. Several brigades of prisoners (30 to 35 men in each) worked on the black sand layer, carrying the removed sand to the hopper in wheelbarrows the same way the rocks had previously been removed.

10. [redacted] at the Bolshevik Mine, the work was conducted 24 hours a day in three shifts of eight hours each. Each shift was 150 to 200 men strong. The remaining prisoners [redacted] worked in other gold mines located in the vicinity of the camp, such as the Chkalov, Chay-Uriya, Tuman, Perelok or Perelokh, and some others 20 to 80 kilometers from the camp [redacted]

[redacted] during the period 1939 to 1940 there were 170 gold mines in the Kolyma region. [redacted]

[redacted] practically every day there was some shifting or prisoners [redacted] groups of 50 to 100 were sent to other camps and groups of the same approximate strength came from other camps [redacted]

[redacted] and in that way information on other mines and camps in the area became common knowledge and oldtimers in the camp knew the names of the majority of the 170 mines by heart. Normally, three to four mines were serviced by one camp of three to four ^{thousand} ~~hundred~~ prisoners. There were rumors that at that time there were 200,000 prisoners working in Kolyma gold mines. [redacted]

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11.

[redacted] since the gold collection compartments were emptied every four hours and work was conducted 24 hours a day throughout the year, [redacted]

[redacted] the output should have been considerable. [redacted]

[redacted] the administration of mines and camps was in the hands of the MGB or MVD. The main administration was allegedly in Moscow on Kuznetskiy Most 27. [redacted]

12. Working conditions in the mine as well as living conditions in the camp were extremely hard. Winter in the Kolyma region is nine and one-half months long, and the average temperature is -40 to -50 degrees centigrade. According to mine rules, regular work had to be performed whenever the temperature was less than -65 degrees centigrade. The rest of the year, i.e., approximately two and one-half months, was a season referred to as "white nights," when there was actually no difference between day and night. Sometimes during this period the weather was quite warm, but then prisoners were plagued by swarms of large mosquitos, the bites of which were dangerous, especially if bitten on the head. During the white nights prisoners were issued special head masks, the fronts of which were made of thin dark wire mesh and the remainder of white gauze. The dark colored mesh was supposed to protect the prisoners' eyes from the harmful influence of light during this season. Because of the extreme ^{cold} in winter, frostbite was a common occurrence among prisoners. [redacted]

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[redacted] Hundreds and hundreds of prisoners lost hands and feet and others lost legs and arms. The food consisted of 600 to 900 grams of black bread daily, depending on fulfillment of daily work norms. Because of the organization of the work, norms were quite complicated

[redacted] Warm food was distributed three times a day: in the morning--half a liter of soup; at mid-day--one liter of soup and a bowl of gruel; and in the evening--half a liter of soup and a cup of tea. There was very seldom any meat in the soup, but most often only potatoes and cabbage.

13. The extreme cold, hard work, and insufficient diet resulted in the deaths of many prisoners. [redacted]

[redacted] at least several hundred prisoners died. [redacted]

[redacted] once while working on a new stope, [redacted] brigade unearthed a large common grave where at least 1,000 prisoners had been buried, one over another. Cases of self-mutilation in order to be sent away from Kolyma were quite common among the prisoners and some were successful. Use of copper coins tied to pussy self-inflicted wounds thereby developing internal inflammations and ~~pukunuk~~ swellings was another way of getting away from work, although this was always connected with a great danger of poisoning which might eventually result in the prisoner's death.

14. Punishment for concealment of gold, even the smallest quantity of it, was always death. This was so well known in the camp that very seldom would a prisoner try to take any gold to the camp. Sometimes, however, some of the natsmeny prisoners could not resist the temptation and took a few

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nuggets to the camp and, although as a rule prisoners were not searched when returning to camp, all these cases very soon in some mysterious way became known to the camp administration and the culprits were taken away and never heard from again. [redacted] these cases were reported to the administration by informers among the prisoners of whom there were allegedly quite a few. A detailed spot check of prisoners' barracks was conducted from time to time and if any gold was found in the area of a particular prisoner's cot, he was held responsible for it regardless of whether he or someone else had hidden the gold there. Such a man was immediately taken away, and allegedly shot. At the same time as spot checks were conducted in barracks, a number of prisoners were taken to the camp administration building, ordered to undress, and while their clothes were searched for gold by means of a special magnet iron, their bodies were X-Rayed for swallowed gold. However, [redacted] fear of punishment was so great nobody except very stupid prisoners ever tried to take any gold to the camp.

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Enclosed: 1 sketch

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GOLD MINING

Stope

(ZABOY)

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GOLD ORE
JIGGING PROCEDURE
AT BOL'SHEVIK MINE

POWER PLANT

WHEELBARROW PATH

LEGEND

✕ METAL SEALS ON GOLD COLLECTING COMPARTMENTS BENEATH THE TROUGH

□ CONVICTS WITH IRON RAKES

Hopper

RUBBER TRANSPORTER

0.5m

WASTE AREA

0.55m

10-12 M.

SECRET

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